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Fiction Rated: [M](#) - English - Drama/Action/Adventure - Reviews: [1294](#) - Published: 07-12-05 - Updated: 08-28-05 id:2480683

Standard Disclaimer: We do not own this universe.

Author's note: This is a super Harry story with a few twists. He's super Harry but he's more interested in hiding his abilities than using them. This will be a very angsty/romance/drama story involving Harry/Hermione.

While many, including ourselves, do not believe in a Harry/Hermione coupling will occur in canon, we felt that if we wanted to expand our skills as writers, it would be appropriate to try to explore something which we don't believe would be possible, then craft a story making it possible.

Sunset over Britain

Chapter 1

The Grangers...

If any of her fellow students had seen her bedroom, they would have been surprised by it. The room was an eclectic mix of utilitarian and very feminine. There was a desk, shelves containing a surprising number of books, and a state of the art computer. The bed, on the other hand, lent truth to the fact that the occupant of the room was female. The tall, four-poster bed was tastefully frilled in a delicate pink lace.

Hermione was worried sick as she paced her room. It had been a week since Harry Potter had vanished from 4 Privet Drive and not a single trace of him had been found. When she first heard about it, she'd written

Ron and his reply disturbed her even more. Ron had spent half of his letter proclaiming his undying love for her, and the other half ripping into Harry.

Ron had feelings for Hermione which she did not return. She liked him well enough, but in the past year his jealousy of Harry, of Viktor Krum, of anything that involved her, had grown to enormous proportions, and it bothered her a great deal. Ron had started throwing around money in this past year which raised her curiosity. She knew the Weasley's were not a wealthy family, so where the money had come from was a mystery that bothered her. She was actually becoming a little frightened of Ron. Between his jealousy and his temper, she was afraid someday he'd have trouble controlling it.

Now she paced her room, ignoring her books and homework. She was terribly worried about Harry. He had seemed so lost and distant on the Express. She knew he was blaming himself for the loss of Sirius, but something else looked wrong with him. Her last sight of Harry bothered her because he looked feverish, his eyes sunken, his hair plastered to his head.

It was now the second week of the summer holiday and in another day she and her parents were due to leave for a trip to Australia. It was supposed to be a long trip. They weren't to return to England until a week before they returned to school. Hermione desperately wanted to go on this trip, but her concerns about Harry were eroding away the anticipation.

She broke from her reverie when doorbell rang. "I'll get it," she shouted, as she dashed from her room. She ran down the stairs, taking the steps two at a time and risking the wrath of her parents. Her mother, in particular, felt she needed to be more lady-like.

Throwing the front door open, she was surprised to see someone she hadn't expected to see and she knew in an instant that his visit was related to Harry. An icy ball of fear formed in her stomach.

"Professor Lupin!" she exclaimed. "Please, come in."

Remus Lupin looked terrible. He looked worse than he did after his monthly transformations, or the days following the death of his best

friend, Sirius Black, in the Department of Mysteries.

He entered the house and Hermione shut the door behind him. Turning towards her, he ran tired hands over his face. "Hermione, I haven't been your Professor since your third year. Can't you call me Remus, or even Moony?" he asked.

"I'll try to remember that Pro... I mean Remus." she said. "Is there any news about Harry?"

Remus smiled weakly. "Are your parents around, Hermione? I need to speak with them before I speak with you."

Hermione frowned. "Yes, I'll get them for you. Why don't you take a seat in the kitchen and I'll put on a pot of tea, then get them."

Hermione led her old Professor into the kitchen, put the teakettle on the stove to heat, and left to round up her parents.

"Professor," Hermione said, entering the kitchen a few moments later, her parents on her heels, "you remember my parents, Dan and Emma Granger?" Her parents were a bit taken aback by his haggard appearance, but sat at the table while Hermione poured them all tea.

"Hermione, I don't mean to be rude, but I'd like to speak with your parents before I speak with you. Why don't you go up to your room and we'll call you when we're done?" Remus asked wearily.

She frowned again and wanted to know what was going on, but one glance from her father told her to get upstairs. Once her bedroom, she tried reading one of her books but couldn't concentrate on the subject, no matter how hard she tried. She was positive that whatever the adults were talking about downstairs concerned Harry.

She was about to start pacing again when there came a tapping at her window. Glancing over, she saw that it was Ron's owl, Pigwidgeon, again. Opening the window, she managed to coax the hyperactive owl to land long enough to retrieve the letters attached to his leg. With a hoot, he landed on her chair and stood, bouncing from foot to foot, staring at her with animated eyes. Apparently, he had orders to wait for a reply.

Glancing at the two letters she found one from Ginny and another from

Ron. She glared at the letter from Ron for a moment, before dropping it on her bed and tearing open the one from Ginny.

Hermione,

It's been a week and still no sign of Harry that anyone's told me about. Everyone thinks that he hasn't been captured by You-Know-Who, but has run away on his own. Somehow I can't see Harry doing that. Did you see how depressed and down he seemed to be on the Express? I hope he's ok.

My darling brother Ronald is being a total arse. He seems to think that Harry has done this to get more attention for himself. He runs around the house screaming at everyone and is constantly angry. I wouldn't be the least bit surprised if he tries to hit Harry the next time he sees him. Did they have a fight that I don't know about?

Mum and Dad also seem really hacked off about Harry. I don't understand it. You would think they would be worried about him, but instead they're angry. I overheard them the other night and it's really making me wonder what is going on that I don't know about. Something is certainly queer here. Mum told me that I'd get new robes and new books this year, then she changed her mind after Harry turned up missing. I never get new robes Hermione, so where did the money come from that Mum would even think such a thing?

Dean Thomas sent me a wonderfully romantic letter telling me how much he misses me. He's trying to get a job in Ottery St. Catchpole so he and I will be able to see each other this summer. Isn't that sweet? And you wouldn't believe how big he is! I found that out our last night at school in one of the broom closets!

*Well that's all the news. Write me, please? With Mum, Dad and Ron snapping at everything, I'm finding it very lonely here this summer.
Your Friend,
Ginny*

Hermione laughed at the last paragraph. That girl had a one track mind and it was nearly always in the gutter. Frowning, she dropped Ginny's letter on the bed, picked up Ron's and opened it.

My Love,

I can't tell you how much I already miss you and can't wait to see you again. Isn't there any way you can talk your parents out of taking you with them? You could stay with us this summer. We're planning on spending the first half of the summer at home, and then we're going to Snuffles old place.

Mum and Dad are really hacked off at Harry for vanishing like that. Can't say I blame them, really. Stupid prat is probably hoping he'll make the papers again like third year. Hey! Remember in third year when they wrote that dumb article about you going out with Harry? Boy, even I knew you would never stoop low enough to date Harry. The jerk. Anyway, enough about rich boy, I'm tired of talking about him.

I can't wait 'til you get here! I found a perfect place for us to go to... let's say, get to know each other better.

*Love,
Ron*

In a fit of anger, she crumpled up the parchment and threw it against the wall. She stamped her foot in rage at Ron. She was about to start cursing when her mother opened the door. The look on Emma Granger's face stopped Hermione up short. She looked incredibly angry. In fact, the last time she looked that angry was because her father had gotten a letter from an ex-girlfriend. Hermione froze like a rabbit staring down the working end of a hunting rifle and wondered what trouble she had gotten into and why.

"Come downstairs, love. We need to talk to you about something important," Emma said in a tone that expressed her anger, but also told Hermione that it wasn't directed at her. With a dizzying sense of relief, she followed her mother downstairs to the kitchen to join her father and Professor Lupin.

Sitting down at the table, she couldn't help but notice how mad both her parents were. She was also struck again by how tired Lupin looked. Emma poured a cup of tea for her daughter before she began to talk.

"Hermione, your Professor here has just told us about some things he's learned and I have to admit to being quite disturbed by them. I'm afraid we're going to have to put off our trip to Australia this year, dear. Once you hear the reasons for it though, I think you will agree it's for the best.

Also, I have to tell you, your father and I are having very serious doubts about allowing you to return to Hogwarts this fall."

Remus reached over and tiredly put his hand on her arm. "Hermione, before you begin to protest, please hear me out." When she nodded, he continued. "Before I explain, I must ask you something. How long was your Matura Magicus?"

Hermione looked shocked at the Professor. She vividly remembered her Matura and had read what little she could find on the subject, mostly in healing texts. But talking about it? That just wasn't done! It was a taboo subject. Lupin might as well have asked her how often she masturbated!

"Professor... I... well..."

"It's alright, Hermione. Just give me a number. How many hours did it last?" asked Remus.

"Just over four hours, Professor," she whispered, blushing furiously.

"And how did you feel during that time, Hermione?" Remus asked gently.

Hermione looked up at her ex-Professor, anger snapping in her eyes. "You know how it feels, Professor. It's the worst feeling you can have. It's like having a major case of the flu, every bone in your body feels like it's breaking and you run a very high fever. I don't understand why you're sitting here talking about my Matura when you should be out looking for Harry!"

Remus smiled at her. "I know where Harry is, Hermione. That's why I'm here."

Hermione bounced out of her chair. "WHAT? You know where he is? You've got to tell the Order! Dumbledore..."

"Hermione Jane Granger! Sit down and listen to the Professor," her father, Dan, said in a loud voice that brooked no argument. Shocked at her father's tone, she meekly sat down and looked at Remus.

"Hermione, will you give me your witch's oath not to tell anyone what I am about to tell you?" asked Remus.

Hermione pulled out her wand. "I solemnly swear not to reveal what I am about to be told without your consent."

Remus sighed. "Thank you. Now, I asked you about the Matura because Harry's going through it now."

"B-B-But that's not possible, Professor. He wouldn't be able to perform magic without undergoing his Matura. He's too old now. It's supposed to happen in his tenth year, not when he's nearly sixteen!" she protested.

"Hermione, I was going through some of Sirius's effects when I stumbled onto a letter from him to me. In the letter, which I can show you later if you want, he told me some of the things he learned about Harry, the Order, and Dumbledore.

"For one thing, Harry's been brutally abused since he went to live with the Dursleys. It explains why he's a good five inches shorter than he should be, why he's so skinny and why his Matura has been delayed.

"But more to the point Hermione, Harry's been suffering under the Matura since he arrived in Little Whinging this summer and it's showing no signs of letting up. I came here today to ask for help from you and your parents. Harry is terribly ill and I'm not sure he'll survive. He can't be left alone for long. I've been away too long as it is. But soon will be a full moon and I need someone to help watch over him.

"When Sirius's will was read, Harry was his sole beneficiary and I was named as his legal executor. Sirius emancipated Harry in the magical world, but I haven't filed the paperwork yet. I've got Harry hidden in a place that's safer than Grimmauld Place or Hogwarts. It's under a Fidelis charm and unplottable. Your parents have agreed to come with me to help care for him. They know how close a friend he is to you, and hearing how he has been treated these past years, they're quite willing to help," he concluded.

Hermione thought furiously. The Matura's been going on for days? She shuddered when she considered that. The Matura was the body's way of focusing its magic so a person can cast spells. It also sets a limit on the amount of power a person can cast! She had never heard about anyone having a Matura that lasted longer than eight hours, and that was extremely rare. Harry was either going to die from this process, or he

would come out of it as the strongest wizard on record.

"But Professor, shouldn't he be at Hogwarts where Madam Pomfrey..."

"NO!" barked her father, shocking her into silence again.

"Hermione," her mother said, reaching for her hands, "according to Professor Lupin, your Headmaster has been systematically robbing your friend Harry of his money for the past sixteen years. It seems that several Order members have also been getting money from Harry's vaults. And if that isn't bad enough, Remus here seems to think that everything that has happened to Harry since his parents died was deliberately orchestrated by your Headmaster."

Hermione slumped back in shock as her conception of her world was torn asunder. Her keen mind starting pondering things, making connections previously not made. Why was the Sorcerer's Stone so badly protected? And what about the Chamber of Secrets? That place should have been found the first time it was opened. In fourth year's Tri-Wizarding Tournament, the naming of the Champions could have been called a four-way draw. That could have negated the magic and new champions could have been selected. And Snape! Why didn't he teach Occlumency to Harry?

Remus watched the young witch carefully. He could see her impressive intellect putting the pieces together.

"Hermione," Remus said softly, to gain her attention. "I'm sorry if this comes as a shock, but I had to reveal this to you and your parents. I need help with Harry. Your parents have medical training I don't have and Harry has been calling for you in his delirium. That's one of the reasons why I came here. Because he trusts you, I have little choice but to do the same."

"Dumbledore knew Harry was very sick and refused to allow anyone to help him. When I finally removed him from the Dursley's, he was badly bruised from beatings, and some of his ribs were broken. Hermione, Harry may die without someone to watch over him while I undergo my transformation. Harry needs your help," Remus said, his face contorted in anguish.

Hermione didn't need any prompting. Harry was her friend, her best friend. In her heart she wondered if someday Harry could possibly be even more. She thought she knew how she felt for Harry, but she was unsure how he felt for her. For now, it was enough to know that her friend was in trouble and needed her.

"You know I don't like breaking rules, Professor. However, if Dumbledore can do so, and put Harry's life in jeopardy while he's at it, then I'm certainly not going to stand for it. If that means breaking rules, so be it. Harry's put his life on the line for me. It would be churlish of me to not come to his aid when he needs it," she stated with a degree of finality.

Remus slumped in his chair in relief and gratitude. "Alright then, Harry's in a safe place, and I can give you a portkey to get to him. What I suggest is that, since you are supposed to leave tomorrow for your holiday, you leave a day early. Park your car in the underground lot at the airport and portkey from there. Hermione should send notes to a few friends, telling them you're leaving a day early for your trip."

Dan Granger nodded. "I'm only a dentist, but Emma here is an oral surgeon. We'll go to the office and get some of the supplies we have on hand, antiseptics, some antibiotics and such. We have some I.V.'s, normal saline, dextrose and water, that sort of thing, which should help. If he's as sick as you say, then keeping him hydrated is going to be a problem."

Later that evening, Emma, Dan and Hermione drove to Heathrow Airport, where they parked their car in the underground car park as Remus suggested. The three of them loaded their luggage onto a trolley and moved to a secluded area.

Looking around and seeing no one, Hermione pulled out the quill that Remus had given her as her father grabbed the trolley. Once her parents nodded their readiness, she touched the quill with her wand and they vanished.

The Burrow...

"Ronald! Come get your owl! It's driving me crazy," yelled Molly Weasley from the kitchen.

Ron bounced his way down the stairs. If his owl was back, that meant a letter from Hermione! He practically ripped the letter from Pig's leg and the small owl hooted in protest. Tearing at the envelope he read quickly.

Ron,

My parents and I are leaving a day early. They have decided that we won't be back until the end of the summer, so I won't be able to come to the Burrow at all this year. I'm sure that once Harry is found, he'll be able to keep you company there. Unfortunately, I'll be staying with muggles, so no one will be able to send me any owls. That means I won't be able to hear about Harry when he is found, which annoys me greatly but there isn't anything I can do about it.

I know how you feel for me, but I do not have those feelings for you. I'm sorry if this hurts or upsets you in anyway but I had to tell you so you could move on. I'm your friend, Ron, and anything more would probably ruin our friendship, not to mention hurt Harry's friendship with us as well. I'm sure you're mature enough to understand this.

Please give my best to your family and I'll see you on the Express September first.

Your FRIEND,

Hermione

Ron swore, threw the letter down on the kitchen table, and then stomped up to his room. Ginny, who was sitting at the table drinking a cup of tea, snagged the letter and started to read. As she did so, more writing appeared.

Ginny,

Remus Lupin has charmed this section so only you can see it. You're right. Something queer is definitely going on. I don't have a full handle on it yet, but I'm working on it. I won't say anymore than to watch yourself this summer, especially around Ron. Burn this letter after you've read it. I'll talk to you on the Express.

HG

While Ginny was watching Hermione's letter burn to ash, Ron was upstairs on his bed, thinking furiously.

That bitch! If she wants to play that way, I'll have to tell Dumbledore

and we'll do it the way he suggested, he thought.

Headmaster's Office, Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wizardry...

Dumbledore paced his office, then looked wistfully at the perch where Fawkes used to sit. His phoenix had abandoned him shortly after Harry's fifth year at Hogwarts.

Harry, he mused, where are you hiding?

Once again, he carefully checked his tracking instruments, which had been repaired after Harry smashed them at the end of last term. They were unable to detect the boy at all. Curiously, he checked on some of the other students. Neville Longbottom was with his Grandmother, as he should be. Ron Weasely was at the Burrow. Interestingly, Hermione Granger was now undetectable as well. He shrugged at that perhaps she and her parents had left early for their holiday.

Another clue that didn't make any sense was Dobby and Winky. Several days ago, the two elves had vanished after leaving a note saying they were quitting their service at Hogwarts. Dumbledore was sure that Dobby quitting and Harry missing was related, but he found out about it after they had left the castle.

Dumbledore's plan had been slightly derailed when he told Harry about the prophecy at the end of the school term. The foolish child had dragged five other students to a battle in the Department of Mysteries, and the only good to come out of that had been the removal of Sirius Black from the picture. For the past four years, sending Harry back to the Dursleys had ensured that he would become more and more dependant upon Dumbledore.

By the end of the term, Harry had such anger and distrust building inside of him that it was disconcerting. It was critical that Harry trust him. Without that, his plans couldn't succeed. With the boy's illness, and the way his relatives treated him, Dumbledore was sure that, by summers end, the boy could once more be led in the right direction.

The Dursley's had been carefully selected because Dumbledore knew they would not provide Harry with a loving environment. Leaving him

there meant Dumbledore would end up with a submissive, but extremely powerful wizard who Dumbledore could guide. What he hadn't counted on was the abuse the Dursley's had heaped on the boy. Instead of a cold, unloving environment, they had beaten and abused him. The Headmaster was aware of the Dursley's actions and had done nothing to prevent it. After all, Dumbledore had gotten what he wished from the situation, a meek boy, more than willing to please those around him, if given just a bit of praise.

However, it all seemed to be falling apart now.

Harry was missing and no one had a clue where he was. Dumbledore didn't believe for a second that Harry was still angry with him. He was sure that once Harry was found, he'd fall into line again. He was such a trusting lad.

Ministry of Magic, Department of Law Enforcement...

Amelia Bones was reading the report of the investigation of the break in at the Department of Mysteries where ten confirmed Death Eaters were captured when the office door opened. Looking up, she smiled as her niece, Susan, entered.

Three days earlier, Susan had held four Death Eaters at bay until help arrived. In doing so, she had not only saved her own life, but the life of a visiting friend, as well as Amelia's household staff.

"Susan, how are you feeling today?"

"Better, Aunt. But my emotions seem all messed up. Sometimes I want to cry, sometimes I get so angry I want to scream."

Amelia nodded knowingly. Such a reaction was common among new Aurors who had just seen their first action in the field.

"Aunt, that's not why I came to your office today," the girl said, sitting down in front of the desk.

"Oh?"

"I'm worried about one of my friends. You asked me a few days ago

where I'd learned to fight. Well, the truth is, last year a group of students at school formed a study group for Defense Against the Dark Arts. I wanted to owl the person who ran the group to thank him because his lessons saved us all, but the owl refuses to accept the letter."

Amelia frowned. For an owl to refuse a letter, the person would either have to be too far away, which is nearly impossible, or in a location totally un-findable.

"Who are you trying to owl, dear?"

"Harry Potter. He and Hermione Granger ran the group with help from a few others."

All of Amelia's senses went on full alert and she leaned forward in her chair. "Potter? Harry Potter?

"Yes, Aunt."

"Don't be afraid, child. You did the right thing," replied Amelia, seeing her niece tense up.

Amelia pressed a button on her desk and a secretary entered the office. Looking up at the woman, Amelia said, "Bring me the complete Potter file, including those of his parents. Then tell William Hill to go over to Potter's currently listed residence and check up on him."

The secretary nodded and rushed from the room.

12 Grimmauld Place...

Nymphadora Tonks was alone in her room at Grimmauld Place. The dark house had been taken over by the Order of the Phoenix in the past year on the approval of her cousin, Sirius Black. Nymphadora, or Tonks as she preferred to be called, was an Auror and a new member of the Order of the Phoenix. In one sense, her loyalties were torn. On more than one occasion she had been forced to break the law for the Order, even though she had vowed to uphold the law as an Auror.

Now she sat wringing her hands in her room. No one had made the connection that she had. Not yet, at least. Remus Lupin had gone out on

a mission for Dumbledore. A few days later, Harry had vanished without a trace from Privet Drive. Remus should have been back yesterday, but there is no sign of him and the owls are refusing to accept any letters to him, just like they refuse owls to Harry.

Tonks' problem was not just loyalties. Over the past year, she had slowly gained respect and admiration for the down-on-his-luck werewolf. Remus was an attractive man, even if he was more than ten years older than she was. He was calm, soft-spoken, and very intelligent. He was also extremely loyal to his friends. When Sirius died, she had spent several hours comforting him and, in the process, discovered she was falling in love with the enigmatic man.

Black Manor, Ireland...

Hermione and her parents stood up from their portkey arrival and looked around. Remus stood at the top of the stairs. Spotting them, he quickly made his way down the elegant marble staircase.

Hermione stepped forward. "Remus, how is Harry?" she asked worriedly.

"His fever is down a little at the moment. I've kept a chart of his temperature so I know this is just a low point for him," he said softly. "Don't worry about the luggage, the house elves will take it to your rooms. Let me take you to Harry's room."

Leaving their luggage behind, they followed Remus up the stairs. He reached a set of double doors and, opening them, led the small group inside. Glancing around curiously, the new arrivals realized they were in the master suite of the manor. The room was spacious and the bed enormous. The room was tastefully appointed, elegant in its simplicity and decorated in muted colors.

Harry lay on the bed, his forehead covered in sweat and his cheeks sunken in. Hermione knew her parents couldn't feel it, but the magic pouring off of him beat at her senses in waves. The power she sensed was nearly staggering.

Seeing her friend's condition, Hermione cried out in protest and rushed to his side. She grabbed the cloth that had fallen from his forehead, dipped it in a nearby basin of cool water and placed it on his forehead.

Dan walked to the other side of the bed, gazed down at the young man and frowned in thought. Reaching down, he took Harry's pulse, and then lightly pinched the skin on Harry's arm. "Emma, we're going to need those supplies. He's dehydrated so we need to start an IV. Let's also see if a painkiller eases the pain he's in."

Emma made a motion to move and Remus stopped her. She looked at him curiously. "Dobby!" Remus called out loud. There was a popping sound as the little house elf appeared. Emma staggered back in a moment of shock and Dan looked on with amazement.

"Dobby, would you please bring the Grangers luggage to this room? There are some items they need in it to help Harry."

"Anything to helps Harry Potter, sir!" Dobby said and, with a pop, he was gone.

A moment later he reappeared, levitating the baggage. Once the bags were on the floor, Emma pulled out the case of medical supplies they had put together. Dan quickly prepared an IV for Harry while Remus conjured a stand to hold it. Once the needle was inserted and secured, he used the I.V. shunt to inject the painkiller.

After a short while, Harry relaxed as the painkiller hit his system. Remus conjured a table and chairs and the adults all sat down. Hermione stay at Harry's side.

"I'm curious, Dan," Remus said. "You're a dentist, but you seem to know an awful lot about muggle medicine."

Hermione looked up. She didn't know how her father knew so much about medicine either, and was curious about his answer.

"Well, before Hermione was born I was a dentist on the HMS Hermes, a Royal Navy air craft carrier. We had to take all the basic medical courses that any sick bay attendant would take. I didn't have much call to use the knowledge until the Hermes went to the Falklands back in '82. When the Sheffield was hit by a missile, the number of wounded we plucked from the ocean was horrific. Our doctors and SBA's were swamped, so they pressed anyone with a medical background into duty.

"I had never seen war up close before and I had nightmares for months after. I opted out shortly after that. Hermione was still a toddler and I didn't want her losing her father because some bloody politician decided a rock in the middle of nowhere was important."

Remus nodded in understanding. He knew, roughly, about the war in the Falklands. Despite the separation between their worlds, even the magical community had found it difficult to ignore that fact that their country was at war.

Emma placed her hand over Dan's and turned to Remus. "Please tell us more about this Matura Magicus. Is it a disease, like Measles?" she asked.

Remus shook his head. "The Matura is something all wizards and witches experience. It's not a disease. It's best to think of it as a sort of magical puberty. In ordinary witches and wizards it happens in their tenth year. It's at that point that they start to gain the ability to control their magic. The Matura actually accomplishes two things. It focuses one's magical core and it sets up how much power one has available.

"For example, and please, forgive me Hermione, but her Matura lasted four hours. That's about an hour over the average Matura. It means she's a powerful witch, more powerful than someone who's gone through a three hour Matura."

"So why is Harry undergoing his Matura so late? And how come it's taking so long if everyone else only takes three or four hours?" asked Emma.

Remus ran a hand through his graying hair. "I didn't find out until I read Sirius's note, but his muggle guardians have been abusing Harry and starving him. The Matura was delayed because he's been prevented from growing as he should have. Lack of food, lack of care, physical and mental abuse, lack of any kind of nurturing environment have all played their part in slowing his Matura. As to why it's taking so long, I don't know. All I can say is if he survives it, he'll be the most powerful wizard on record. Oh, speaking of records..."

Remus got up and walked to the desk. Opening a drawer, he pulled out a notebook and a ledger. Walking back, he placed both on the tabletop.

"The notebook contains a chart of Harry's fever. I don't know if it's useful to you or not. Harry's godfather, if you can believe it, stole the ledger before he was killed. It's a record of the activity on Harry's trust account. In the past year alone, nearly a million galleons have been removed from the account and I know Harry didn't take the money out."

Dan, who had been looking over the fever chart, interrupted. "Remus, are these numbers right?" he asked worriedly.

"Yes, they are."

"What have you been doing to bring the fever down?"

"Mostly cool clothes to the head. I've tried to get him to drink a fever reduction potion, but he just won't swallow. I was afraid he'd choke, so I stopped trying. That's when I made the decision to come to you for help."

"What is it, Dan?" Emma asked.

"He's been running a fever of a hundred and one degrees for the last three days. Previous to that, his fever went through the normal cycle of spiking and breaking. According to this chart, it hasn't broken this time."

"Three days?" Emma asked, looking over at the pale young man lying so still on the bed.

Dan stood. "We need to break the fever, it's been going on far too long. Can you conjure a large tub?" When Remus nodded, he added, "Fill it about half full with lukewarm water."

Remus created the tub needed while Dan went over to Hermione. "Love, we're going to try to break Harry's fever by placing him in a tub of cool water. You might want to step out of the room as he's going to be naked for this."

Hermione looked up defiantly. "No, you're going to need help Dad. It'll take the three of you to get him in the tub and someone needs to make sure the IV doesn't pull loose."

Dan smiled down at his daughter. "Good girl! This Harry of yours must be something special indeed for you to insist on being here for this."

Hermione could only nod in reply and she turned back to her friend. Dan looked over the tub Remus had conjured and smiled in approval.

When Harry was lifted from the bed, Hermione blushed at his nakedness. Looking away, she quickly grabbed the I.V. stand and walked closely behind the adults.

For the next twelve hours, the four battled Harry's fever. They removed Harry from the tub when his fever dropped, only to return him to the water twenty to thirty minutes later as the fever climbed once again.

As the first light of dawn peaked through the drapes, and sleepy birdsong reached the bedroom, Harry's fever reached one hundred and five degrees. As Remus called out the pale youth's temperature, Hermione collapsed on the floor in exhaustion and looked up at Harry in despair.

"We're losing him," Emma murmured to her husband.

Dan sat down tiredly and ran a shaking hand through his hair, thinking hard. "There's one more thing we could try, Emma," he said quietly.

"You're not thinking...No, Dan! The shock alone could kill him."

"And what do you think will happen if we don't break the fever?" he asked in a low, fierce tone. "That young man has fought hard for weeks against this illness. He's strong, Emma. We have to try!"

"What is it?" Remus asked.

Looking at the werewolf, Dan saw the grief and sorrow in his gray eyes. "I have an idea, Remus, but it's dangerous. It could kill him. I don't know a lot about the Matura, and if we do nothing, he could live. But my experience with fevers tells me that he probably won't. The fever must be broken, but it has to be your decision."

Remus looked down Harry. Reaching out, he ran his finger down the young man's cheek. "Do it," he said quietly.

"What?" Emma asked.

Remus turned towards Dan. "Whatever it is, do it. I can't lose him."

Dan nodded, then stood up. "First, replace the water in the tub with ice water. It has to be cold, Remus, very cold. It's going to be a dangerous shock to his system and we need to be prepared to administer CPR if need be."

At Remus' puzzled look, Emma explained cardiopulmonary resuscitation, while Dan spoke quietly to Hermione, telling her what they were going to do.

Once Remus had changed the water in the tub and all was ready, Dan said, "Remus you might want to call the house elves in as well. His reaction to the cold water could get violent and we may need more help than just the four of us," Dan added.

"Dobby, Winky!" Remus called.

Remus quickly explained to the two house elves what they were going to do and what they hoped to accomplish. The three adults then went over to the bed. Hermione grabbed the IV stand once again.

Placing Harry in the tub, Dan knelt down and dipped a cloth into the icy water. As he bathed the young man's face, the others stood, watching closely.

The minutes ticked by with no reaction from Harry. Dan laid the cloth over the side of the tub and checked Harry's pulse. When Remus pulled out his wand to take Harry's temperature once more, he saw eyelids flicker a moment before he found himself staring into a blazing emerald fire.

Harry leapt to his feet, ice water cascading down his body, and yelled, "BLOODY HELL MOONY, WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO TO ME!" Then, just as suddenly, his knees buckled.

Winky and Dobby leapt into action around the shocked humans and levitated Harry before he could hit the floor. They moved him over to the bed and covered him with a sheet.

Remus took his temperature again, and then sighed in relief. "It's down to ninety nine degrees. What do we do now?" he asked, looking at the others.

"We wait," Dan replied. "The fever may begin again. If it doesn't, then he should wake up soon."

Emma looked at everyone. "Perhaps now would be a good time to take a break for something to eat? We can eat here, at the table."

Remus nodded and asked Dobby to serve them in the bedroom, rather than the dining room. The little elf gazed at Harry for a moment before nodding and vanishing with a small pop.

As her parents sat down with Remus at the table, Hermione looked closer at Harry. She had seen a few things today that would forever be burned in her brain, but what caught her attention was the crisscrossing pattern of fine scars that seemed to cover his torso. She clenched her teeth as she realized that her best friend had been hiding a terrible secret from her for five years. She wasn't sure whether to be angry about it or weep for the pain he had endured.

"Hermione? Come join us," Remus said softly.

Hermione turned to him, her eyes filling with tears. "WHY? WHY Remus? Why would anyone beat him like that and why wouldn't he tell anyone? Why didn't he tell me?" she asked before breaking down, sobbing.

Emma stood and walked over to her daughter, sweeping her into her arms. She gently pulled the sobbing girl from the bedside to the table. She sat Hermione down on a chair and knelt by her side.

"Love, according to Remus, Harry has been abused for a long time. When that happens to a person, they start to feel as if they somehow deserve the treatment. They feel that if they tell anyone, it will get worse. Sometimes they even feel that they don't deserve to be happy or loved..." She trailed off, looking up at the other two adults for some support.

"Hermione, think of it this way. You know how brave Harry is, but he's been treated both as a conquering hero and a villain by our world. You also know how he hates to share his problems with others. He thinks his problems aren't worthy of our attention. Think how embarrassed he'd be if people found out his muggle relatives were beating and starving him," added Remus seriously.

"Your friend is going to need a lot of your support, Hermione, not your anger," Dan said gently. "I want you to think about that carefully. He has known so little in the way of the love of a parent, or even of a friend. Which brings me to another issue. Remus, I think we should hold off on telling Harry what Dumbledore and his Order have been doing to him until we've figured out how to stop it."

"I'm not sure I agree with that. We need to tell him something. But I do agree we'll need to figure out a way to stop it," replied Remus seriously.

When the adults began to discuss how much to tell Harry, Hermione picked at her food, her mind in overdrive. *Dad's right, Harry wasn't trying to hurt me by not telling me about his home life. And if I really consider it, he's dropped plenty of hints that his home life was not at all good, she thought. What he needs now more than anything else is a friend who will support him and be there for him, and I'm going to do just that!*

She ate her meal and listened to the adults. They had finally agreed not to tell Harry specifics of anything they weren't positive of, but would warn him not to trust anyone in the Order, especially Dumbledore. She was about to tell them of Ron Weasley and her suspicions when she heard a noise coming from behind her.

Turning abruptly, she saw Harry looking at her. His hand moved feebly in her direction. "Hermione?" he whispered.

She dashed from her seat to his bedside. She felt his forehead and was relieved to find it still cool. "How do you feel, Harry?" she asked him gently.

"Tired... hungry..."

The adults crowded around him, smiling. Remus called Winky and asked for some soup and bread for Harry.

"Harry, you've been sick for a long time, over two weeks. It's going to take a bit for you to recover your strength, so we want you to relax," Remus said, the relief evident in his voice.

Emma helped prop Harry up with some pillows while Hermione helped him eat the soup. Every now and again she'd dunk a piece of bread in

the soup and let him chew on it. His arms and legs felt so weak that he was grateful for her help.

Hermione couldn't help smiling down at her friend. He was going to live!

When the soup was gone, he looked around at the Grangers and the room he was in. "Moony, where am I? What's going on?"

Remus frowned for a moment. "Harry, there's a lot going on and I promise I will tell you about it when you're stronger. But for now, Hermione and her parents have agreed to come help you recover from your sickness. As to where we are, well, this little house belongs to you now. Sirius left it to you, among other things. It used to be called Black Manor, but I suppose we'll have to change that to Potter Manor now."

Harry leaned back into the pillows and closed his eyes, a single tear slid down his cheek. "No, Moony. If I've got to call it anything, I'll call it Padfoot Manor, in his memory." He smiled as Hermione gripped his hand and gave it a squeeze in support.

"I think that's a wonderful idea, Harry," the graying werewolf said, closing his eyes against a wave of grief. Opening them a moment later, he saw himself reflected in the green eyes staring at him and he smiled softly before saying, "Now, until you're up and about, we'll have someone here with you all the time, even at night. Dan and I will switch off the nights to make sure you're all right. During the day, Emma and Hermione will be here to help you. Also, Dobby and Winky are here to help out. Oh, and a couple things. Harry, Hermione, this manor house is under a masking charm, so you can practice your magic without the Ministry detecting it. And there's a library..."

He trailed off as Hermione bounced to her feet and yelled, "YES!"

Harry smiled at her antics as his eyes closed and he drifted off to sleep, safe for the moment.

Ministry of Magic, Department of Law Enforcement...

Amelia Bones sat at her desk, frowning. She was reviewing Harry Potter's file and finding many discrepancies that bothered her a great deal. Apparently, when his parents had been killed, Albus Dumbledore

had circumvented the entire placement process. According to the records, the Potter's will had been very specific as to who Harry should go to if anything happened to them. In fact, his parents had listed several people, starting with Sirius Orion Black, as possible guardians and they specifically stated that Lily's sister should not get Harry.

Auror Hill had reported last evening that Harry Potter was not in Privet Drive and hadn't been seen for over a week. His guardians had no desire to file a missing persons report on him. Hill had talked to Amelia last night and he admitted to being suspicious of the muggles. He didn't suspect foul play in Harry's disappearance, but he did suspect Harry had been abused while in the home.

Further reading of the file showed a number of disturbing incidents that seemed to be aimed at discrediting, undermining, or outright injuring the young man, starting with his first year at Hogwarts.

Amelia had been involved in the incident that took place the summer before Harry's fifth year. The Ministry's response to Harry's use of the Patronus charm during that summer had been excessive. She had participated in the trial and it had clearly been a travesty of justice. The trial should never have been held in the first place, and she was glad she'd been able to derail it.

The last incident, Harry's break-in at the Department of Mysteries, clearly didn't fit the patter. Yes, Harry had led the group, but Voldemort had been behind it. That wasn't the case with the others, and Amelia wondered just who was pulling the strings.

There was also a strange pattern of withdrawals from the young man's trust account that she couldn't account for. It had taken some extensive digging and prodding the Goblins at Gringots on her part, but they had finally released some of the records. In the past year alone, nearly a million galleons had been withdrawn from his account. Some of the monies had gone to other Gringots accounts and, on at least one occasion, to a muggle account.

Sixty years in law enforcement hones ones instincts and those instincts were telling her something was seriously wrong. It appeared to her that not everyone was looking out for Harry's best interests. She wrote a note to send to Auror Hill, telling him to form an investigative team with two

purposes. First, find Harry, then, follow the money trail.

The Burrow...

Ginevra Weasley was the youngest of seven children and the only girl. As such, her brothers hovered around her, protecting her like she was some precious object, the crown jewel of the family. In her own mind, she found this particular aspect of her family annoying. Of all her brothers, Ginny was most like the twins, Fred and George.

She also had a Slytherin streak in her a mile wide. Therefore, few who truly knew her would find her current activity surprising. She had been banished to her room a few minutes earlier, and was now using a pair of extendable ears to listen in on a conversation between her mother, Ron and Professor Dumbledore.

"I'm sorry, Molly, but it's out of the question! Until Potter is found, there is no safe way to touch that account. No, it will have to wait until September when he's back in school, I'm afraid," said Dumbledore.

"Oh, very well Albus, I'll wait. But just so you know, we need those galleons come September!" Molly said with asperity.

"Headmaster, have you given any further thought to my problem with Hermione?" Ron asked.

"Yes, Mister Weasley. I agree that we need to get her under our control. To that end, I have instructed Professor Snape to make the appropriate potion for you. Since she won't be back until the start of the school year, I suggest giving her the potion during the welcoming feast," Dumbledore replied. "In the meantime, we have more pressing concerns on our hands. Finding Potter is just one of them. I learned this morning that the Ministry has also set up a task group to find him. We must not allow them to succeed."

Ginny quickly reeled in the ears and leaned back in her chair in a state of shock. *WHAT THE BLOODY HELL IS GOING ON HERE?* She thought furiously. *I need to find a way of contacting Harry or Hermione!* *Something really strange is going on.*

Padfoot Manor, Ireland ...

Harry opened his eyes and looked towards a window. He didn't know it but he had slept for two days straight. Sunlight streamed in through the open window and a gentle breeze ruffling the drapes. He could hear the sound of birds singing and it made him smile. He felt tired and weak, but he'd had enough sleep. He thought about trying to get out of bed, but he was naked under the blankets. Naked?

"What the hell?" He murmured softly.

"Oh, you're awake!" Came a vaguely familiar voice.

He turned to see a brown topped blur approach and sit on the side of the bed.

"Hermione?" He croaked, pulling the blankets up to his chin. There was a sound of throaty laughter.

"No, dear. I'm Emma, Hermione's mum. Hermione is busy right now, looking through your library I'm afraid, but I expect she'll be along shortly."

Emma reached over to the night table, picked up Harry's glasses and put them on for him. Harry blinked for a moment as the world swam into focus.

"Where am I, Mrs. Granger? How did I get here? What's happening?"

"Go easy, Harry. First, let me get you some breakfast and then I'll tell you some of what I know. Remus will probably fill you in on all the details in a day or two, but he's recovering from his transformation."

He sat up on the pillows as Emma placed a breakfast tray on his lap.

As he ate, Emma explained some of what Remus had told her and Dan. She said Remus had come to visit him and found him dreadfully ill. Remus had removed him from the Dursleys home and taken him to Black Manor, where he would be safe. She also told him that Remus had discovered that some people Harry had thought to be friends were actually working against him and that he had to be extremely careful who he talked to.

Frowning, Harry motioned for Emma to continue while he ate.

"Well Harry, that's about it for now. Remus came to us because you had been calling for Hermione while you were sick. He seemed to think that if you trusted her, then maybe he could get us to help you. He didn't want you left alone when he underwent his transformation. Apparently, he got a letter from your godfather that explained how there were some really strange things going on around you. Your godfather managed to steal a copy of your trust account ledger, which shows some pretty hefty withdrawals."

"B-B-But I haven't been to Gringots in a few years," Harry protested.

"Yes, we know. It seems someone else has been helping themselves to your trust money."

"Alright then, I'll wait 'til Remus can talk with me, but in the meantime I have to get better. Are there any clothes in the dresser Mrs. Granger? I need to start getting up and about, but I can't do it naked," he said.

Emma rummaged through the dresser and later, turned her back so he could dress. He had just slid out of the bed and started to put on a pair of boxers when Hermione threw open the door. Harry, startled, fell backwards on the bed while Hermione stood, blushing to the roots of her hair.

"Hermione! Turn around," Harry yelled as he trashed around on the bed, trying to pull up his shorts. Emma was holding her sides, trying to contain her laughter, while her daughter buried her face in her hands. Emma couldn't help but notice her daughter was peeking between her fingers, which only caused her to laugh harder.

Harry finally got his pants on and calmed down a bit as he continued dressing. He told the two of them it was alright to turn around again.

Harry was facing away from them as he struggled to pull on a shirt and both women noticed the scars on his back. They much like the scars they'd seen on his chest the night before. Hermione vowed silently she'd never let anyone hurt Harry like that again. Emma, seeing Hermione's fierce expression, smiled knowingly and quietly left the room.

"Harry, come sit at the table for a moment, I'd like to talk to you about something," Hermione said, a bit nervously. Then she added quite impishly in her best Minerva McGonagall imitation, "Quite impressive, Mr. Potter."

Harry blushed and stared at her confused as she sat at the table.

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Oh honestly, Harry. I'm not going to bite you. Come sit down. We have some things we need to talk about."

Harry took a chair and looked at her expectantly.

"How much did my mum tell you, Harry?"

"She said that Remus took me from the Dursleys, and not to trust anyone except for you guys."

"Yes, I suppose that's a good start. Did she say why you were sick?"

"No. No one's said anything about that yet."

"Tell me Harry, have you ever heard of Matura Magicus?"

Harry looked at her in confusion. Hermione chuckled at his expression.

"I'll take that as a no, Harry. Alright then, the Matura is a process we all go through. In a normal witch or wizard, it lasts between three and four hours. It's kind of like puberty. You do know what puberty is, right?"

Harry looked away and said something under his breath. Hermione could barely make it out, but she could have sworn it sounded like, "Well, I like what it's done for you." Hermione heart skipped a few beats and her thoughts went wild for a moment before she recovered.

"Harry, the Matura is like puberty for a wizard or witch. It takes the magic in our body and focuses it so we can use it consciously. It's not something people talk much. It's private and very personal. The amount of time you undergo the Matura is directly related to how powerful you are. For most, it lasts just about three hours."

"And that's what I had? I thought it was more like a flu or something."

"No, the symptoms are flu like, but it was the Matura. The problem is,

you should have underwent your Matura on your tenth birthday."

"You went through this also, Hermione? How long was it for you?" he asked her, seriously wanting to know.

"That's personal, Harry. I don't ask you about your private life, do I?" Hermione replied snippily.

Harry ducked his head, staring down at the table. "I'm sorry," he mumbled.

Hermione frowned, as many pieces of what she knew of Harry's life clicked into place in her mind. His constant apologizing was just a reaction to his upbringing. She reached over and grabbed his hand. Startled, he looked up at her.

"My Matura lasted just over four hours, Harry," she said softly.

"That makes you pretty powerful, doesn't it?"

"Well, it does to an extent, but there have been a few cases of longer Maturas. The longest one on record in the book I read was eight hours. You broke that record..."

Harry looked at her with astonishment. "Just how long have I been sick?"

"You looked like you were getting feverish when we got off the Express at Kings Cross Station. A week later, you went missing. So, if I'm right, you've been undergoing the Matura for fifteen days now."

"Great! Another thing to be a freak about," Harry muttered under his breath and looking away.

"Harry Potter! You're not a freak! Just because you had a longer than usual Matura, that doesn't make you a freak."

"It is too abnormal Hermione. I can't even fit into the Wizarding world without being abnormal. I'm tired of being weird!"

Harry spun out of his chair and threw himself on his bed. He wanted to scream, break things. Like all of this past year, his anger raged and he was having difficulty controlling it. Years of repressed anger were within

inches of boiling over and he knew he couldn't let it happen. The last time he had come close, he had destroyed Dumbledore's office and, before that, he had inflated his Aunt Marge. Shuddering, he pulled himself back from the edge. As he did, he noticed that someone was rubbing his back.

He looked up from his pillow.

"Hermione?" he asked.

"Shhh Harry, just relax. You're still weak from your illness. I can't pretend to understand what you're feeling, but I want you to know that you can talk to me about it. You can't keep it all bottled up inside you without it tearing you apart."

Reluctantly he agreed that he would try to talk to her about what he was feeling and why. With Hermione gently stroking the hair on his head, he drifted off to sleep.

Grimmauld Place that same evening...

It was a full meeting of the Order of the Phoenix, the group Albus Dumbledore had formed back during the first war with Voldemort. This meeting was entirely different, however. Tonight, they would talk about one Harry Potter.

Dumbledore was getting desperate to find Harry. According to Snape, even Voldemort was now looking for him again. Three different groups and not one had a clue were to find the boy.

Dumbledore's grand plan to make himself more famous than Merlin would sink fast if Potter wasn't found soon. He knew that Harry had to kill Voldemort, the prophecy was infallible in that regard. But once Voldemort was dead, Potter could be eliminated or just pushed to the side, leaving him the most powerful wizard on record.

If Potter could be found, that was.

Tonight he had to light a fire under his people. Few, very few, knew about some of his motives and no one knew about his ambitions. In fact, most of the Order were sincerely opposed to Voldemort and thought the

Order was working to stop him.

Dumbledore looked out over the people arrayed around him, then he knocked on the table to garner their attention.

"Friends, we must do everything to find Harry and bring him here. His safety is paramount, even if it means losing the chance to capture Death Eaters," began Dumbledore.

Collectively, the group looked at Dumbledore in shock. This change in mission priority was strange to them. They had known Harry was missing for over a week now, but this seemed to be a radical shift to many.

"We've learned that the Ministry and Voldemort are desperately seeking Harry Potter. I can only hope we can find him first. I believe that if Harry is captured by Voldemort, he will attempt to turn him and possibly be successful at it. Without Harry, and I know some of you will find this difficult to accept, but without Harry, we stand no chance of defeating Voldemort."

"I don't know what else we can do, Albus. The Ministry is at a loss and seems to be having as little luck as we are. The Ministry has even begun random aerial searches," stated Arthur Weasley.

"Whatever hole that brat has found to hide in is obviously a deep one," sneered Professor Snape.

"Has anyone heard from, or seen, Remus Lupin lately?" Dumbledore asked. "He should have been back from Northern Ireland three days ago."

"I tried to send him an owl two days ago but the owl refused to accept the letter," said Tonks worriedly.

"Indeed, Ms. Tonks. In the future, I expect you to inform me as soon as these things happen. I guess it's safe to assume that wherever Remus is, so is Harry Potter. Interesting," replied Dumbledore, leaning back in his chair. *Remus knew nothing of what was going on. Perhaps he merely took the boy to some place safe where he could enjoy a peaceful holiday? Remus felt a tremendous sense of responsibility towards young Harry, Dumbledore thought.*

"Ronald tried to send Hermione a long distance owl and it was also refused," added Molly Weasley.

"So Miss Granger has somehow linked up with Harry? Kingsley, has there been any activity at the Grangers?"

"No, Albus. They were seen leaving their house a day early for their trip and Moody followed them until it became clear they were headed to the Muggle airport."

"It is possible that the Grangers are simply too far away for a post owl, even a long distance one, to want to make that journey. I do believe Miss Granger had mentioned traveling to Australia this summer.

"No, I think the most likely scenario is that Harry is with Remus, who probably wanted to give Harry some quality time after what happened at school. Finding Remus will probably result in our finding Harry. I am somewhat heartened by this. Remus loves the boy and will see no harm comes to him. Nonetheless, we should make every effort to find him and bring him back to Headquarters."

Ministry of Magic, Department of Law Enforcement...

"Auror Tonks is here to see you as you requested, Director," said her secretary.

"Send her in please."

A moment later Nymphadora Tonks walked into the office. Her immediate reaction was a mental "*Oh Shit!*" as she saw the Director looking over her personnel file. She guessed that her initial reaction was justified when she saw that Miles Masters, the Ministry's leading Obliviator sat at the Director's side. On a table in the corner were several stacks of documents.

"I'm curious, Miss Tonks," Amelia said in a frosty tone. "Just where do your loyalties lie these days?"

Tonks blinked in confusion. "Ma'am?"

"I'm asking where your loyalties lie, Tonks. On the one hand, you're one

of our brightest up and coming young Aurors. On the other, you're a member of a marginally legal, paramilitary organization run by Albus Dumbledore known as the Order of the Phoenix."

"I can assure you Director, there is no division of my loyalties between my job and my outside activities," said Tonks in a frosty tone.

"I should warn you, Miss Tonks, right here and now, you're only a short step away from being arrested. Some 'things' have come to light in regards to your organization, your activities, and one Harry Potter, which are most disturbing. Do you see that table loaded with documents, Auror Tonks?" she asked as she stood and walked over to it.

"These documents," Amelia said, pointing to one pile, "contain evidence that Mr. Potter was illegally placed with his muggle relatives. I would like to point out that more than half of this pile are Harry's medical records, detailing dozens of broken bones and injuries sustained during the first nine years he lived with those people."

Tonks blanched and paled when she saw the size of the stack of papers on the table. *Abuse? He's been abused by those muggles?* she thought.

Then Amelia pointed to the smallest pile. "This pile contains information documenting Mr. Potter's time at Hogwarts and his interaction with the Ministry. I might further add that Mr. Potter's dealt with more dark wizards in his short school career than many full time Aurors. There is some very interesting information in here. But the most interesting information isn't in this pile of documents. Oh no Auror, its in the third pile."

Amelia moved to the third pile and placed her hand on them. "This pile shows very interesting financial transactions from a child of one of the richest Wizarding families. Tell me Auror, did you ever notice that Harry has but one set of school clothes and the rest of the time he wears only slightly better than rags?"

Tonks could only shake her head. She liked Harry, he was a good kid as kids go, and she was still struggling over the abuse issue.

"It's very interesting to note that, in the past year, nearly one million galleons have been removed from Mr. Potter's trust vault. The money

has been transferred to several accounts, owned by members of the Order and his muggle relatives. We've since discovered that Harry has not received any of this money. His clothing hasn't been replaced and he hasn't received any better care. It was just taken from him. Some would say stolen from him."

Amelia walked back to her chair while Tonks stared at the massive pile of documents, her mind churning.

"Now I ask you again, Auror. Where do your loyalties lie? Do you uphold the law, or do you work for Albus Dumbledore?" asked the Director coldly.

Tonks turned back from staring at the table and straightened in her chair. "Director, say the word and I'll take a team to bring in Dumbledore," she said angrily.

Miles Masters slowly relaxed next to Amelia. The Director leaned back in her chair, a cold smile on her face.

"Very good, Auror Tonks. Now, I'll let you in on a little secret. There is an ongoing investigation into Dumbledore's organization and I want you to play a part in that investigation. Here's what you're going to be doing..."

Padfoot Manor, Ireland ...

Over the next several days, Hermione, Remus and Hermione's parents discovered several unusual things about Harry. First, Harry seemed to have developed the ability to use wandless magic at a very high degree of sophistication.

Second, Harry was a growing young man. Literally growing right before their eyes. Harry, in the course of several days, shot up from his short height of five foot five to five feet eleven and his upper body bulked up considerably. Another change that surprised everyone was the fact that Harry no longer needed his glasses. The best explanation anyone could offer was his that magic was imposing upon his body changes that should have taken place over the course of five years. The Matura, in releasing Harry's magic, had allowed his body to wash away the physical effects of years of abuse and starvation that had kept his growth stunted.

Remus and the others had filled Harry in on what they knew for sure, and he had been deeply hurt by their actions and the sense of betrayal he felt. The idea that Dumbledore might be involved in something so underhanded didn't seem to bother him as much as the fact that the Weasley's might be involved. Hermione had reluctantly told them all about her suspicions about Ron.

Once the information had been imparted to Harry, he retreated into himself and rarely spoke unless spoken to. He seemed to give trust easily, but was quite unforgiving when it came to betrayal.

Harry and Hermione took long walks outside of the house. As long as they stayed on the ground they were undetectable and safe. It was during these walks that Hermione began to finally understand what made Harry tick. His years of abuse had left him with a very low sense of personal worth. Harry just believed his life wasn't worth as much as anyone else's.

Slowly Hermione got Harry to talk about his life with the Dursley's. It hadn't been easy for Hermione to listen to. She never thought of herself as having much of a maternal instinct, but Harry's tales were enough to make her blood boil. Sometimes he didn't want to talk about it and he'd rage at a question or try to storm off. Hermione would always follow him and eventually get him talking again. His rages were terrible to see, and during them there would be bursts of uncontrolled magic. But no matter how out of control the magic got, he never harmed her. Sometimes during his explanations he'd break out weeping and Hermione would hold him long enough for him to regain control.

The worst part of all wasn't the rage that Harry would sometimes express. It was his hunger for things she took for granted. He had desperately wanted his Aunt and Uncle to love him and they had rejected him. He felt that was somehow his fault. He hungered for emotions and feelings that he had never experienced.

Hermione was torn. Having been hurt by Ron, she wasn't sure she wanted to get involved with anyone, let alone Harry. But his physical changes over the past few days had made him a major distraction. When she added in his emotional problems, she realized that anyone who got involved with Harry would have to go very slowly and carefully. Logic said she should avoid a romantic entanglement with him, but her heart

suggested otherwise.

At the moment, Hermione sat with her back against a tree. She was pretending to read a book, but she was really engaging in what was fast becoming her favorite pastime, Harry watching. Harry knew she was there, but he was busy trying to coax a squirrel into taking a peanut from his hand. She was stuck by how gentle he was. In some ways, he had an almost child-like wonder of the world, and in others, he had the cynicism of an old man who'd lived a hard life.

Hermione smiled as Harry coaxed the little animal right into his hand. The squirrel sat contentedly in his hand as he fed it peanut after peanut until its cheeks bulged with them. Then his eyes narrowed sharply. With a sudden intake of breath, he placed his little friend on the ground and one hand shot straight upward, emitting a flash of bright light.

When the light faded, Harry stood and walked over to Hermione, offering her a hand up.

"Harry? What was that?" she asked.

"Ministry Aurors on brooms flying overhead. I extended the Fidelis charm to cover the property in a bubble instead of a wall so it won't be visible," he replied.

"We'd better go find Remus and my parents and let them know."

Without thinking about what he was doing, Harry grabbed Hermione's hand and they went in search of Remus, Dan and Emma.

They found the adults sitting on the veranda enjoying a bit of afternoon tea. The adults smiled at their arrival, noticing that they were holding hands. Harry suddenly blushed and released Hermione's hand. She, in turn, blushed when she realized that he had been holding her hand all the way back.

"Remus," Harry started, "we need to go over the wards for this place. We just had a flyover by Ministry Aurors. I took care of it by extending the Fidelis charm into a bubble over the property, but I want to make sure the rest of the wards are alright."

Remus' jaw dropped in shock. A bubble shaped Fidelis was supposedly

impossible!

"Um... right Harry. How about we do that now? Hermione can stay with her parents while we check the wards," Remus replied, standing up and taking Harry back into the house.

"How are you and Harry getting along?" asked Dan with a smirk.

"Dad," she said playfully, smacking him on the arm. "He's my friend and I'm trying to help him!"

"Oh. well it seems to me you and your 'friend' found hand holding enjoyable," Emma added with a grin.

Hermione blushed and buried her face in her hands. Emma reached over and put her hand on her daughter's shoulder. "It's alright, Hermione. Just give him time. He seems like a very polite, fine young man. I'd say one of his problems is he's in totally uncharted waters right now."

"I know, Mum."

93 Diagon Alley, Weasleys Wizarding Wheezes...

Ginny Weasley stepped from the floo into the spacious store. She had agreed to spend several days a week helping her brothers, but only under the condition that they didn't test any pranks on her. And they did pay her for her work.

Today was different. She wanted to talk to her brothers about what was going on at home. Fred and George could be serious, but not if they were in the same room together. There was some inherent flaw in their makeup that prevented their serious bone from kicking in if they were together. So today, Ginny would have to channel her mother if she was going to get anything out of them.

Ginny brushed the ash off her robes and looked around the shop. There were only a few customers about. Her brothers, Fred and George, were behind the counter.

"OY! Gin-Gin," shouted Fred.

"Your not supposed to be here today," added George.

"It's a day off for you," Fred continued.

Ginny gave her brothers her best Mum look and pointed at George.

"You! Mind the counter while I talk with your evil twin," she hissed, then she pointed at Fred. "Come along, you. I want to speak with you," she added, flawlessly imitating Molly at her worst. Fred quailed for a moment before following her into the back room.

Shutting the door, Ginny rounded on her brother and glared at him with her hands on her hips. "I want to know what the bloody hell is going on! First, I find out that Ron has put a three hundred galleon deposit on a new Nimbus broom, then he's forced to cancel the order because Harry is missing? Suddenly he's acting like he hates Harry and would like nothing better than to beat him up. Then I hear him discussing slipping a potion to Hermione at the welcoming feast with Dumbledore..."

Fred's eyes grew larger and larger as Ginny ranted. Finally, he stopped her by the simple expedient of grabbing her and putting a hand over her mouth. Struggling to the door, he yelled to his brother.

"OY! George! Close up the shop and get back here! NOW!"

Ginny continued to struggle in her brother's arms, and she managed to land a few decent kicks to his legs before George arrived. George took one look at the scene and his eyes popped wide open.

"Ginny, stop it," began Fred. "I'm going to let you go in a second. I want you to explain slowly and carefully now, to both of us."

Fred released her and she bounced a few steps away before turning on the two of them.

"Ginny," pleaded Fred. "Explain it slowly again."

Ginny huffed for another moment then told her brothers the tale. George had recognized as soon as he entered the backroom that the situation was serious, so he prudently withheld any joking comments. When Ginny finally wound down, she looked at her two older brothers expectantly.

Fred looked at George. In that strange bond that exists between twins,

they seemed to hold a silent conversation and come to a decision.

"Ginny, you've just given us more confirmation to something we were suspecting," Fred said sadly, holding up his hand in a bid for her silence when it appeared she was going to say something.

"A couple months back," he continued, "Dumbledore approached us because we had been asking for some advice on how to deposit money directly into Harry's Gringots account. He tried to convince us to put it into an 'Order' account instead. George here joked about Dumbledore wanting to steal Harry's money. But as time went on, it sounded more and more logical. I mean, why else deposit it to an account that Harry can't access?"

"I can't say I like this business with Ron and Hermione one bit. I think Harry and Hermione need to be warned somehow," stated George.

"You guys are here in the Alley all day. Keep an eye out for Harry or Hermione. Maybe they'll show up here needing something," replied Ginny.

Fred and George nodded to their sister and she headed out to use their floo to return to the Burrow.

Padfoot Manor, Ireland...

It was early July and Harry was having breakfast on the balcony of his bedroom when Hermione and her parents joined him. Something was happening between them, but by an unspoken agreement, they had decided to take it real slow. Harry was getting more comfortable telling her things, but for him, it wasn't an easy or even pleasant process opening up after so many years of hiding his hurt.

A few times she ask him something that, much to his own embarrassment, would reduce him to tears. Then she'd hold him and he'd cling to her, drawing what comfort he could from her. He was slowly coming to grips with his past, thanks mostly to Hermione and her parents.

The Grangers had surprised both Remus and Harry in how willing they were to help, especially when Harry had finally sat down with all of them

and explained why Voldemort was so interested in seeing him dead. Hermione wept when she first heard the prophecy, and her father, in particular, took a grim view of the Wizarding world in general. Since that day, they had each offered to help in any way they could. That sort of unconditional support was new to Harry.

Hermione dropped two dusty old volumes on the breakfast table as she and her parents joined him at the table. Harry eyed the old books and looked at Hermione questioningly. She had a look about her that he had learned to dread. It was the same look she'd have when she wanted him and Ron to study.

"Harry, I found a couple of wonderful books in your library," Hermione started with a manic grin.

Harry reached over and took the two books from the table and looked at them. *Occulmency for Masters and Beginners*, by Cyrus T. Tubertooth, read the first book. The other was an advanced potions book called *Potions of the Ages* by Vander Morton. Handing Hermione the books, he grimaced. She knew he was a lot like Ron when it came to studying.

Sighing, he said, "Alright Hermione, I know I need to learn Occulmency anyway, but I'll make a deal with you. We'll split the days in half. Mornings for studying, and in the afternoon, I'll teach you how to have fun, including learning to ride a broom."

Hermione turned red and immediately started to sputter. "H-H-Harry Potter! I know how to have fun! And I certainly do not need to learn how to fly a broom."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Even when we take a walk you bring along a book. I know you love your books and love to learn, but you're missing the world Hermione. Please? Try it for a week and if you don't like it, you can go back to spending all day reading."

Dan and Emma burst out laughing. Hermione sat back in her chair with her arms folded across her chest, looking at him and making huffing sounds.

"Harry," began Emma with a laugh, "if you can make our Hermione learn to have fun, then you must be more powerful than she seems to think

you are."

"MUM," Hermione shouted as she stood up.

Harry's seeker's reflexes kicked in and his hand shot out to grasp her wrist gently. He pulled her back into her seat, and then he turned to face her fully. Hermione had trouble tearing her eyes from his emerald gaze. His eyes glowed with power and a sadness and hurt that would never go away. Hermione was particularly vulnerable to his gaze. Since his recovery, his green eyes seemed to radiate a power which put even Dumbledore to shame. When he was angry, his eyes seemed to spark with lightening flashes. When he was happy, they seemed to be almost lit up from behind by the power of his magic. They were eyes she could stare into for hours at a time, windows to Harry's soul.

"Hermione... You are probably one of the last few true friends of my own age I have left. By your own words, Ron has betrayed me. Who knows what the rest of the Weasley's think? I don't intend to force you to do something you'd hate, and I'm more than willing to spend time every day studying and practicing with you. All I'm saying is, in the afternoons, we try to have a little fun," he said quietly.

Dan and Emma watched the interplay with amusement. Hermione had all the earmarks of being the Wizarding version of a workaholic. But right now she was staring into her friend's eyes and her resolve was clearly weakening.

"Oh, alright Harry. But I'm going to hold you to the studying and practicing," she said with a half smile.

Harry grabbed her hand and gave it a quick squeeze before releasing it and grabbing the *Occulmency* book.

"I suspect I'd best start with this one, then. What about you, Hermione? Potions?" he asked.

"Oh, Remus asked me if I'm able to brew the Wolfsbane potion. I told him the potion room here didn't have all the ingredients, so he's going into Diagon Alley today to pick up enough to make several batches, just in case I make a mistake the first time."

Harry chuckled. "Hermione, in the six years I've known you, unless

Snape was deliberately ruining your potion, you've never gotten one wrong yet. Every one has been right the first time."

Hermione couldn't help but preen under Harry's praise.

Ministry of Magic, Minister's office...

"Minister, Director Bones is here. She's asking for some of your time."

"Please send her in, Janet," Minister Fudge told his secretary.

A moment later, Amelia Bones walked into the room. Fudge felt no great affection for his Director of Law Enforcement, but even he had to admit she was competent in her job.

"Ah Amelia, so nice to see you again. What can I do for you today?" asked Fudge.

"Minister, thank you for seeing me on such short notice. I wanted to speak to you about something we're investigating," came her reply.

Fudge motioned for her to continue as he poured himself a cup of tea.

"Minister, some of the things I'm about to reveal to you cannot be told to anyone else. We have reason to suspect that there is a some sort of major problem going on between Harry Potter and Albus Dumbledore. In fact, I am very concerned for Mr. Potter's well being at this point.

"We have reason to suspect Albus Dumbledore has been helping himself to Mr. Potter's trust account, and there are definite irregularities involving Mr. Potter's placement with his relatives, contrary to his parent's will. His placement in that environment has led to an unusually high number of personal injuries to Mr. Potter..."

Fudge leaned back in his comfortable executive chair and thought about it for a moment. Last year he had allowed a smear campaign to be waged against both Dumbledore and Potter. Maybe he had been wrong. Maybe it wasn't Potter and Dumbledore? Maybe Potter was just a pawn in Dumbledore's game? He continued to muse for a moment longer when something Amelia said snapped him back to attention.

"Missing? Potter's missing?" he asked sharply.

"Yes, sir. As far as we can tell, his relatives picked him up in early June from the Express. He spent roughly a week with them, then vanished without a trace," Amelia replied.

"Director, do you think he's gone into hiding or has something worse happened to him?" asked Fudge.

"We have no reason to suspect foul play at this time, Minister. If You-Know-Who had gotten his hands on him, Mr. Potter would have been killed and he'd be publicly bragging about it. No, I suspect he is in hiding."

"Director, I am authorizing you to put the full weight of your department on this if need be. And any other department you might need, for that matter. I want Potter found and I want him to know that the Government will support and protect him. Don't pressure him, but if possible, let him know he can feel safe coming to us for aid and assistance," said Fudge.

"As you wish, Minister. I'll get my department right on it," Amelia said as she stood up.

Fudge never noticed her leaving. *Maybe I was wrong about Potter*, he thought. *In any event, if I can use Potter, even slightly, against Dumbledore, then it will be worth helping him.*

Author's Notes:

Well with the first chapter, there are few notes to put in place. Read and Review.

A couple stories I'd like to recommend to people.

The Refiners Fire by Abraxan. This is a sixth year fic and its one of the best I have read. MUCHO RECOMMENDO!

The Father by black-phoenix-warrior, a work in progress, super Harry fic, but very well done. Also highly recommended.

For all you canon pickers out there. One word. DON'T. Sit on your

fingers, take up knitting. This story is going to be so far off canon it's not funny. It is the intent of us to take this entirely AU!

We are doing this deliberately. Why? Because we want to. Wait 'til you get to the scene where Dumbledore and McGonagall are bathing in Lime Jello, drinking Tequila shots and playing saxophones while Lemon Drops wearing Cowboy hats dance in a chorus line. Just kidding. Well maybe. Never can tell.

And now continuing with my Pet Peeves.

Things I hate in Fan Fics. Author's begging for reviews. I ABSOLUTELY LOATHE Authors posting notes like, "Gee, thanks for the reviews, now I'll post the next chapter when I see another twenty reviews!"

This is low, if you're writing fan fic for reviews only, don't bother writing.

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